

still—we are still—in the springtime of life as a nation. We are still planting seeds and bearing fruit. We are still growing and creating, still inspiring and innovating, still providing life and hope for people around the world seeking to escape the chains of tyranny, and to embrace the blessings of liberty.

Indeed, the sun is still rising on a bright American morning. And if we will keep the faith, no matter the challenges or the choices we face, generations to come will remember and think well of us for this: We never gave up. We never backed down. And we always stood strong for freedom.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

HONORING SENATORIAL SERVICE

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I see others who wish to speak, and I will make a couple of brief comments.

In the comments of the Senator from Virginia, his final couple of comments recalled for me a statement made in the closing of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, when on the back of the chair of the presiding officer was a sunburst. Someone opined in that Constitutional Convention: Dr. Franklin, is that a rising sun or is it a setting sun? And Franklin ventured to say that with the birth of the new Nation, with the creation of the new Constitution, that he thought it was a rising sun.

Indeed, it is that hope, that optimism of which the Senator from Virginia has just spoken—uplifting words—that are the feelings that generate this Senator from Florida to get up and go to work every day, and to look at this Nation's challenges, not as a Democratic problem or a Republican problem, but as an American problem, that need to be solved in an American way instead of a partisan way.

We have had far too much partisanship over the last several years across this land, and, indeed, in this Chamber itself. And of the Senators who are leaving this Chamber, I think they represent the very best of America, and on occasion have risen in a bipartisan way. It has been this Senator's great privilege to work with these Senators: ALLEN of Virginia, BURNS of Montana, CHAFEE of Rhode Island, DAYTON of Minnesota, DEWINE of Ohio, FRIST of Tennessee, JEFFORDS of Vermont, SANTORUM of Pennsylvania, SARBANES of Maryland, TALENT of Missouri.

As the Good Book in Ecclesiastes says: There is a time to be born and a time to die. There is a time to get up, and a time to go to bed. There is a time for a beginning, and there is a time of ending.

For these Senators who are leaving, it is clearly not an ending. It is an ending of this chapter in their lives, but this Senator from Florida wanted to come and express his appreciation for

their public service, to admonish those where admonishment is needed when this Chamber, indeed, this Government, has gotten too partisan, but to express this Senator's appreciation for the quiet moments of friendship and reflection and respect in working together, which is the glue that makes this Government run.

Whether you call it bipartisanship, whether you call it friendship, whether you call it mutual respect, whatever you call it, the way you govern a nation as large and as complicated and as diverse as our Nation is—as the Good Book says: Come, let us reason together—that is what this Senator tries to be about. And that is what this Senator will try to continue to do in the new dawn of a new Congress. So I wanted to come and express my appreciation for those Senators, who will not be here, for the great public service they have rendered.

Mr. President, I am truly grateful for their personal friendship and for their public service.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I appreciate the words of my friend from Florida as I rise today and say my farewell to this body. I do it with some sadness, but I also do it with some great pride. I also do it with a great appreciation for the Senate and for the people who serve here.

It has always been one of my personal honors and privileges to serve the State of Montana and the country for the last 18 years, and with such distinguished and honorable men and women.

We have seen a lot of changes. I want to answer my good friend from Florida, before he leaves the floor: We have seen some changes come over the body, and I would suggest that we turn off that eye that surrounds this body, turn it off and turn the Senate back into the debating body it was once known for, with collegiality, because the best I have ever seen the Senate operate is in executive session. When you turn off the television and we get to the issues—and we have some marvelous people, dedicated, on both sides of an issue, who can argue the issue—some of us who may not be as disciplined in that particular issue as others could learn and vote more intelligently. I suggest that, but I doubt that will ever happen, being that that is out in the public today. I thank the Senator for his observation. We need to get back to the great debates that were held on the floor of the Senate many years ago.

It was back on January 3, 1989, when I was sworn in the Senate. It was a proud day in my life and, of course, for my wife and our family. I got to thinking during that day that only in America could something like this happen. I was fortunate and, of course, we had both my wife's family, who are Ne-

braska folks, and my family, who are Missouri folks, in attendance that day. They are just folks, but they are emblematic of those people who were born of the land and in the heart of America—ranchers and farmers.

It was on the prairies of Missouri where I was born and raised on a little old bitty farm of 160 acres—what I call “2 rocks and 1 dirt”—not a very good farm. But I have fond memories of that place. I give thanks every day that I was born to that family and in that old house that still stands on that 160 acres. Of course, in my younger years I gained most of my philosophy in life. I was born of folks who weren't very wealthy, as you would define wealthy. They were a product of the Great Depression and the terrible droughts of the 1930s. They survived by hard work and great pride. The values they passed on to most of us in my generation were the love of this country first, community pride and loyalty to that community, and honesty to the core. Russell and Mary Francis were married 59 years on that day when I was sworn in. And I will tell you, when they witnessed proudly their son sworn into the most prestigious body in the world, only in America can that happen. It is truly the miracle of our country. It was also a proud day for all of our family.

I will say right now that we could not do well in this body without the true support of a wife and family because it is from that source that we draw our strength and, yes, our wisdom, as long as they are by our side. Phyllis, of course, and Keely and Garrett were all here. What blessings God has bestowed upon me personally. One was missing and that was Kate. God called her home back in 1985, but she remains in our memories and hearts forever. Again, one cannot do this job without the support and sacrifice of our family.

We have seen a lot of positive things happen in Montana. Montana has just begun to grow in new directions. Montana is a resource State, with timber, mining, oil, and agriculture. But we have new opportunities now, and they have opened. I am proud to say that it was me and my office that led the way on most of those changes. It is said that it is not bragging if you have done it. I was fortunate enough to attract a staff that shared the same vision of change, and change we did. Montana is not short of visionaries. It was my privilege to know them, work with them, and to move our State forward.

There is one thing about Montanans: They are not afraid to dream. As you know, dreams never die; dreamers do. Our colleges and universities now are national leaders in research and development, agriculture, engineering, and communications. We have telemedicine and distance learning where none existed before. We have seen a real leap forward in our infrastructure and transportation and rural utilities. We have watched an elevated vocational educational system grow. Tribal colleges on our seven reservations are

growing and now offer opportunities that have never been available to our Native Americans in the history of our State. More Montanans are working today and owning their own homes than at any other time in the history of our State.

I had the honor of serving with three Presidents, and one could say four, as it was in the closing days of President Reagan's term. They are all honorable men and dedicated to this Nation. I know what it is like to be in the minority, and I know what it is like to be in the majority. One great statement was made: "The majority is more funner."

I have enjoyed my work with some of the best men and women in the Senate who represented both sides of the aisle, from different regions of our country and diverse cultures of our country. I will miss them. But we have welded some friendships that will last forever. The same could be said of nations to which we have traveled and met national and international leaders on all continents.

During my tenure here, we have witnessed the crash of the Berlin Wall, freedom in the market base come to the Eastern block in Europe, and the electricity that was in the House of Representatives when a newly elected President of Poland made his historical speech in a joint session. I will tell you what: It brought joy, tears, and pride to all of us in that Chamber.

Like every Member of Congress, I wept when two of our Capitol policemen died on that summer day protecting this Capitol and us who live and work here. Still, our hearts go out to their families. They will never be forgotten.

I leave with many memories. I ask the Senate to return to the deliberative and collegial body it was designed to be. I know it has that ability because I have seen it firsthand. But the challenges ahead are tremendous for this Government. I can only list about six of them: taxation, regulation, energy, health care, education, and litigation. We must face those challenges if we are to live in this free entrepreneurial and economic country. I suggest that we don't just dwell on the national interests first and all others separate.

Members of this body are just average men and women, but they have the capabilities of rising to any occasion of crisis. They are just average, but they also have a higher degree of dedication to our country. I never underestimated any Member of the Senate, and I regard them as quiet heroes in a time of peace and in a time of turmoil and even in the most stressful time in the process of developing legislation that sets policy for our land.

I shall miss all of you. It has been my great privilege to serve with you. As I leave, I say God bless you all.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL ROBERT F. ECKFIELD, JR.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor this morning to pay tribute to Marine LCpl Robert F. Eckfield, Jr., from Cleveland, OH. On October 27, 2005, Lance Corporal Eckfield died from injuries sustained in Iraq. He was 23 years of age at the time.

Lance Corporal Eckfield is survived by his father Robert, his mother and stepfather Virginia and Norman Taylor, and younger siblings Nathan, Rachel, and Norman, Jr.

Even from a very young age, Robert knew he wanted to serve in the Marines. He was adventurous, loved being outdoors, and had a strong sense of duty and patriotism. In addition, Robert's family had a long tradition of military service. His grandfather had been a marine and fought in World War II and Korea. His Uncle Bill served in the Marines at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. And Marine Cpl Derek Wright is Robert's cousin and the two enlisted together after the terrorist attacks on September 11. According to Corporal Wright, Robert wanted to be in the Marines ever since he was 12 years of age.

Robert worked hard for the privilege of wearing the Marines uniform. While working odd, part-time jobs, he enrolled in Cleveland Christian Academy and attended night classes so that he could earn his high school diploma. Immediately after graduating in 2002, Robert joined the Marines. As his mother said:

Right from the start, he wanted to [fulfill] his duty. He went right into boot camp after graduation.

Virginia was worried about Robert's decision, but she supported him because she knew how important the military was to her son. Their family drove down to Parris Island, SC, to celebrate his graduation from boot camp.

Robert was a truly brave marine. According to his family, he had his mother promise that he would be buried in Arlington if anything ever happened to him in Iraq during his third tour of duty. Robert served willingly and never questioned his duty.

In Iraq, Robert served with the 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force based in North Carolina. Robert was an outstanding marine, someone who always gave it everything he had. He served with passion, honor, and dedication.

Two fellow marines who served with Robert in Iraq wrote the following to their friend on an Internet tribute Web site:

[Eckfield] was one of the most outstanding marines we had. . . . [We] want everyone to

know that Eckfield had something no other junior marine had . . . and that was heart. Eckfield never complained about anything, and he was one of the best we had.

Robert fell in love before he left for Iraq. His girlfriend was Beth Dunkle. She wrote the following words of tribute to Robert:

Bobby was a great man. We were only together for a short time, but it felt like we knew each other our entire lives. There was a connection the moment we met. Our journey started there, and my love for him will never die. He is a true hero. Words can't express how much I love him and miss him.

Robert and Beth were able to spend some time together before he left on his third deployment. Beth visited him at Camp Lejeune where Robert filled a room with rose petals, champagne, bouquets, and chocolate-covered strawberries. Beth said they talked about everything—from Robert's ambition to be in law enforcement after leaving the service to the future in general and them sharing it together for a lifetime.

In the words of Robert's mother:

He just fell in love with a wonderful woman named Beth. . . . When he was home in September, they talked about how happy they would be when he could return home for good in April, and they could be together. He sent her roses on Sweetest Day.

When Robert died, although Virginia would have liked to have had her son closer to her in Ohio, she honored his last request to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. On November 5, 2005, nearly 60 family members and friends traveled there for the service where Marine GySgt Barry L. Baker presented Robert's mother a flag in her son's honor.

Robert was a young man who had a bright future before him. He planned to attend college when he returned from Iraq and aspired to a career with either the Central Intelligence Agency or the State Department.

Robert will be dearly missed by everyone who knew him. Teachers who knew him when he attended John Marshall High School in Cleveland were so proud of his accomplishments as a marine and devastated when they heard of his death.

According to family friend Steve Dever, all activity at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport halted when Robert's body arrived. In Steve's words:

I'm glad to see he's getting a hero's funeral.

Before he was buried at Arlington, a memorial service was held in Robert's honor at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Cleveland. Robert's cousin, Richard Samkas, said he and Robert grew up like brothers, and that he remembers him as a "fun, outgoing kid [who] always had some things funny to say." After the memorial service, these were Richard's words:

If there is any way I'd want someone to remember him, it's his honor—the way he honored the military every time he put on that uniform.

The world is a better place because Robert lived among us. He was a young